

**B. Claim Amendments**

Claims 5-8 (Cancelled)

9. (New) Arrangement for guiding at least two sutures through a wall of a membrane, of a balloon or of a surface, in particular of an artery of an individual, in the vicinity of the edge region of an opening provided therein, and formed if appropriate by cutting in and/or cutting out, and for drawing back out of the abovementioned opening the suture ends guided through the relevant wall, comprising: a shaft-like suture-guide device in which the sutures fastened on needles are guided in guide and/or accommodating openings such that, by way of the relevant suture-guide device, they can be guided through the wall of the relevant blood vessel and drawn back out of the abovementioned opening again such that, by virtue of the suture ends being drawn together outside the relevant opening, the latter can be closed, characterized in that the suture-guide device, in its longitudinal direction, contains a rear suture-feed part, a front suture-accommodating part and a central suture-release/suture-clamping part located therebetween, and in that the abovementioned central suture-release/suture-clamping part can be rotated at least relative to the front suture-accommodating part and has such a cross section that, in at least one rotary position, it allows the sutures fed from the rear suture-feed part to be introduced into accommodating openings exposed in the front suture-accommodating part and, in a rotary position differing from the abovementioned rotary position, it allows the sutures accommodated in the relevant accommodating openings together with the needles to be secured for drawing the entire suture-guide device out of the abovementioned opening.
10. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 9, characterized in that the rear suture-feed part, the central suture-release/suture-clamping part and the front suture-accommodating part each have an oval-shaped cross section.

11. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 10, characterized in that the rear suture-feed part, the central suture-release/suture-clamping part and the front suture-accommodating part of the suture-guide device each have the same oval-shaped cross section at least in their adjacent regions.
12. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 10, characterized in that the cross section of the central suture-release/suture-clamping part has a smaller width than the cross sections of the rear suture-feed part and of the front suture-accommodating part.
13. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 9, characterized in that the rear suture-feed part, the central suture-release/suture-clamping part and the front suture-accommodating part of the suture-guide device can all be rotated relative to one another.
14. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 9, characterized in that the central suture-release/suture-clamping part is formed by a region of reduced cross section of the rear suture-feed part.
15. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 14, characterized in that the region of reduced cross section of the rear suture-feed part is formed by a separate part, which is fixed to the rear suture-feed part.
16. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 9, characterized in that the central suture-release/suture-clamping part has a thickness which corresponds to the thickness of the wall of a membrane, of a balloon or of a surface, in particular of an artery of an individual.
17. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 9, characterized in that provided in the rear suture-feed part and in the front suture-accommodating part are  $m$  groups, where  $m \geq 2$ ,

of  $n$  longitudinal and accommodating holes located one beside the other, where  $n \geq 1$ .

18. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 9, characterized in that the rear suture-feed part has longitudinal holes in which the sutures fastened on the needles can be displaced by means of separate pushers and can be introduced, via the central suture-release/suture-clamping part, into accommodating holes aligned with the longitudinal holes, said accommodating holes belonging to the front suture-accommodating part located in its one position mentioned above.
19. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 18, characterized in that the accommodating holes of the front suture-accommodating part have such a depth that at least the needles located at the front end of the sutures can be accommodated in their entirety in said accommodating holes.
20. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 18, characterized in that the accommodating holes in the front region of the front suture-accommodating part have their longitudinal axis, aligned with the longitudinal axis of the longitudinal slots of the rear suture-feed part, running at an angle.
21. (New) Arrangement according to one of Claim 18, characterized in that the guide openings are located at the edge of the suture-feed part and are covered by a sheeting part secured on said suture-feed part.
22. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 21, characterized in that the guide openings in the rear suture-feed part are positioned in the direction of the outer circumference thereof to such an extent that part of the outer circumference of the needles is located outside the outer circumference of the rear suture-feed part.

23. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 18, characterized in that located in the suture-feed part, alongside the guide openings, are supply chambers in which there are accommodated additional needles which are connected to further sutures and, once the needles initially provided in the abovementioned guide openings have been introduced into the accommodating openings provided in the front suture-accommodating part and the pushers advanced for this introduction operation have subsequently been drawn back into a withdrawal position, in which the relevant supply chambers are released, pass into the abovementioned guide openings, in which they can be introduced, by means of the abovementioned pushers, into accommodating openings provided in the front suture-accommodating part.

24. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 21, characterized in that, for accommodating the abovementioned further needles, use is made of the same accommodating openings in which the needles which were initially located in the guide openings are accommodated.

25. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 22, characterized in that the additional needles accommodated in the supply chambers can be introduced by spring force into the abovementioned guide openings.

26. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 22, characterized in that if further accommodating holes are provided in the front suture-accommodating part, before the further needles accommodated in the supply chambers are introduced into the abovementioned further accommodating holes of the front suture-accommodating part, the latter is rotated relative to the rear suture-feed part such that the further accommodating holes provided in the front suture-accommodating part are aligned in relation to the guide openings provided in the rear suture-feed part.

27. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 23, characterized in that, before the abovementioned further needles are introduced into the accommodating openings of the front suture-accommodating part, the rear suture-feed part and the front suture-accommodating part are rotated relative to the central suture-release/suture-clamping part.
28. (New) Arrangement according to Claims 9, characterized in that the central suture-release/suture-clamping part is connected to a hand grip by means of a sleeve part which passes through the rear suture-feed part in a rotatable manner, and in that the rear suture-feed part and the front suture-accommodating part are connected to rotary adjustment wheels, if appropriate, via a sleeve arrangement arranged coaxially with the abovementioned sleeve part.
29. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 28, characterized in that the rotary adjustment wheels are connected to latching catches which allow the relevant rotary adjustment wheels, and thus the rear suture-feed part and front suture-accommodating part connected thereto, to be adjusted into determined angle positions relative to the hand grip, and thus to the central suture-release/suture-clamping part.
30. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 28, characterized in that the rotary adjustment wheels for the rear suture-feed part and for the front suture-accommodating part are coupled to a locking/release mechanism such that the displacement of the needles by the respective pusher is released only with the suture-feed part and suture-accommodating part aligned in relation to one another.
31. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 30, characterized in that the displacement of the ~~needles is released in the case where the central suture-release/suture-clamping part is~~ located in its suture-release position.

32. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 9, characterized in that the rear suture-feed part and the front suture-accommodating part have a guide element passing through them, with the aid of which the front suture-accommodating part can be rotated relative to the rear suture-feed part.
33. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 32, characterized in that the guide element is formed by a guide wire.
34. (New) Arrangement according to Claim 32, characterized in that the rear suture-feed part has a sleeve part, which encloses the guide element, passing through it, it being possible for the central suture-release/suture-clamping part to be rotated relative to the rear suture-feed part by means of said sleeve part.
35. (New) Arrangement according to Claims 9, characterized in that, on its surface directed towards the central suture-release/suture-clamping part, the front suture-accommodating part has swing-open and swing-in spring elements which, with rotation of the front suture-accommodating part from its starting position relative to the central suture-release/suture-clamping part, swing open in a first direction such that the surface of the relevant front suture-accommodating part is correspondingly increased in size in the direction of the central suture-release/suture-clamping part, and which, with guidance of the suture-accommodating part back into its abovementioned starting position, can be moved back into their swung-in state again.
36. (New) An arrangement for guiding at least two sutures through a wall of a membrane, of a balloon or of a surface, in particular of an artery of an individual, in the vicinity of the edge region of an opening provided therein, and formed if appropriate by cutting in and/or cutting out, and for drawing back out of the abovementioned opening the suture ends guided through the relevant wall, comprising: a shaft-like suture-guide device in

which the sutures fastened on needles are guided in guide and/or accommodating openings such that, by way of the relevant suture-guide device, they can be guided through the wall of the relevant membrane or of the relevant balloon or blood vessel and drawn back out of the abovementioned opening again such that, by virtue of the suture ends being drawn together outside the relevant opening, the latter can be closed, it being the case that the suture-guide device, in its longitudinal direction, contains a rear suture-feed part, a front suture-accommodating part and a central suture-release/suture-clamping part located therebetween, and it being the case that the abovementioned central suture-release/suture-clamping part can be rotated at least relative to the front suture-accommodating part and has such a cross section that, in at least one rotary position, it allows the sutures fed from the rear suture-feed part to be introduced into accommodating openings exposed in the front suture-accommodating part and, in a rotary position differing from the abovementioned rotary position, it allows the sutures accommodated in the relevant accommodating openings together with the needles to be secured for drawing the entire suture-guide device out of the abovementioned openings, according to patent DE 199 42 951.0-C1, characterized in that the abovementioned central suture-release/suture-clamping part (5) can be expanded in one axial direction (X-X) such that that wall of the membrane, of the balloon or of a surface, in particular of the vessel wall of an artery of an individual, which is located in the region of the relevant central suture-release/ suture-clamping part (5) is thus subjected to tensioning, on account of which those edge regions of the relevant membrane, balloon or surface or vessel wall which are provided transversely to said tensioning direction draw together toward one another.

37. (New) The arrangement as claimed in Claim 36, characterized in that the central suture-release/suture-clamping part can be expanded mechanically and/or electrically and/or pneumatically/hydraulically.

38. (New) The arrangement as claimed in Claim 37, characterized in that the central suture-release/suture-clamping part can be expanded in the abovementioned one axial direction in that at least one edge part of the relevant suture-release/suture-clamping part which is located in said axial direction can be moved in the outward direction.
39. (New) The arrangement as claimed in Claim 37, characterized in that the central suture-release/suture-clamping part is divided up into a central part and into two adjacent edge parts which can be moved relative to the relevant central part.
40. (New) The arrangement as claimed in Claim 38, characterized in that the respective edge part of the central suture-release/suture-clamping part is connected to a pushing and pulling device, the actuation of which can displace the respective edge part relative to the central part.
41. (New) The arrangement as claimed in Claim 38, characterized in that the central suture-release/suture-clamping part has two clamping parts which, in an inactive state, are accommodated by an accommodating tube and, in the latter, are subjected to an outwardly directed movement pressure in each case by a force-exerting device, in particular a spring and which, once the relevant accommodating tube has been drawn back, are forced away from one another in an active state.
42. (New) The arrangement as claimed in Claim 41, characterized in that the two clamping parts can be guided toward one another by means of a pulling device.
43. (New) The arrangement as claimed in Claim 39, characterized in that the abovementioned edge parts can be moved relative to one another by means of a slotted-guide control device.



44. (New) The arrangement as claimed in Claim 39, characterized in that the abovementioned edge parts are connected to the relevant central part via pneumatic/hydraulic chambers and can be moved relative to the abovementioned central part by pneumatic/ hydraulic action.
45. (New) The arrangement as claimed in Claim 36, characterized in that, in its outer region, the central suture-release/suture-clamping part is designed concavely for abutment against the edge region of the abovementioned membrane, balloon or surface or vessel wall.